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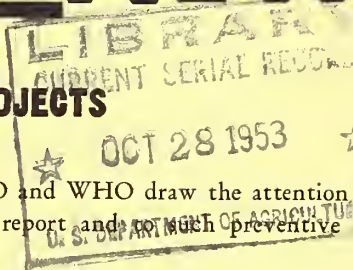
NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1953

WASHINGTON, D. C.

PROGRESS IN U. N. NUTRITION PROJECTS



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United Nations agencies concerned with nutrition and standards of living collaborate with governments in five main types of nutrition activities: (1) Determination of the food and nutrition situation and problems in an area; (2) improvement in the food supply, including research on availability and use of foods of high nutritive value; (3) demonstrations of feeding programs or of public health nutrition services; (4) development of educational programs; and (5) training of workers.

Agencies most directly concerned with these problems are FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), WHO (World Health Organization), and ILO (International Labor Office).

Often, after one agency is called in by a country to help on a specific problem, others may be requested to add their support in order to approach the problem on a broader basis and to make a unified attack. Each program is planned so that the country can go forward on its own when U.N. aid is no longer available.

ATTACKING KWASHIORKOR

Around the World

Measures taken to combat kwashiorkor illustrate how the project has developed from the initial gathering of information to concerted action programs by FAO, WHO, UNICEF, and the countries and regions involved.

Kwashiorkor is a serious and widespread form of malnutrition due primarily to protein deficiency. It is seen most often in young children during the post-weaning period. (See Oct. 1951 NCN). Its high incidence in Africa was called to the attention of an Inter-African Conference on Food and Nutrition at Dschang in the French Cameroons in 1949. Later that year the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition recommended an inquiry into the various aspects of the syndrome.

By 1951 the inquiry on kwashiorkor in Africa was completed by Brock and Autret and reported to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee. The Committee recom-

mended that FAO and WHO draw the attention of Governments to the report and to such preventive measures as—

- Increased local production of kwashiorkor-preventing foods—fish, protein valuable cereals (millets, sorghums, and rice), milk, and meat;
- Expanded production in village gardens of pulses and vegetables, especially green leafy ones;
- Increased consumption of groundnuts (peanuts);
- Storage of food in home and community to protect diets in the "hungry months;"
- Supplementary feeding programs for mothers and children;
- Nutrition education to improve feeding of children during weaning and other periods;
- Demonstration of preventive measures within selected areas in which kwashiorkor is prevalent.

The committee suggested further study of the disease and of foods eaten by mothers and children with attention to the quantity and quality of the breast milk infants get and the foods children eat during weaning and later. It also suggested (1) a meeting in Africa on problems of infant and child nutrition; (2) a study in Latin America similar to the one in Africa with FAO and WHO providing experts and fellowships for scientific workers, if necessary; (3) a survey of kwashiorkor and other nutritional problems in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific Region; and (4) communicating to UNICEF the preventive and curative properties of nonfat dry milk.

By 1952 several recommendations made in 1951 were being carried out. Governments in French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo assisted by FAO, WHO, and UNICEF started pilot projects aimed at preventing and treating kwashiorkor.

A conference on malnutrition of African mothers, infants, and children was held in the Gambia by the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa. This conference was immediately followed by a meeting in the Gambia of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee concerned with the same problem on a world basis. As a means of preventing kwashiorkor, the committee suggested

that FAO and WHO hold a joint conference on how villages might organize and develop food production and extension programs for nutritional improvement.

The expert committee also recommended for world distribution a FAO/WHO review of current work and developments in protein malnutrition and periodic small meetings of joint FAO/WHO nutrition committees in different regions on the same subject. In 1953, the Third Regional Nutrition Committee in South and East Asia was concerned with this problem at their meeting in Bandung, Indonesia. Exchange of information about ongoing projects at this meeting showed that countries in the region were increasing their protein supplies by—

- “Combined farming” to produce more pork and fish in which fodder is grown for pigs and fish, and manure and waste parts of fish are used as garden fertilizer;
- Development of odorless, palatable fish flours of good keeping quality and low price for use in rice gruels, wheat biscuits, and similar products;
- Manufacture of an acceptable dried soy milk for children and infants; and
- A protein concentrate for human consumption from presscakes, the residue after oil has been extracted from fresh coconut.

The third FAO Conference on Problems of Nutrition in Latin America to be in session this October will devote a large share of its meeting to protein malnutrition in mothers, infants, and children as recommended by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Nutrition.

PUTTING RESEARCH FINDINGS TO WORK

In Central America and Panama

Ways to overcome widespread deficiencies of vitamin A, riboflavin, and protein of good quality in diets in countries served by INCAP (The Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama) have been indicated by the Institute's research. This has included surveys of food habits, clinical examinations, laboratory determinations of food composition, and studies on the use of animal and vegetable protein in diets of children.

INCAP is urging member countries to stimulate the growing and use of high-carotene types of squash in school and home gardens. Also it is suggesting that vegetable protein of high quality (soya milk) can be substituted for animal protein in school lunches that contain a fair amount of animal protein and that distribution of vitamin B₁₂ in tablets may prove economical and effective where minimum levels of animal protein are not available.

Since in this area infants and preschool children are most likely to suffer from inadequate diets, attention is being

given to proper supplementation of the infant's diet when mother's milk is insufficient, and to providing a satisfactory diet for the weaned infant.

In August 1953, a School Feeding Seminar for Central American countries was held in Costa Rica in conjunction with the Latin American Training Center for the Production, Utilization, and Distribution of Milk Products. The purpose of the seminar was to stimulate the feeding programs in these countries and give additional training to the workers of the area.

New effective and inexpensive iodine compounds—potassium iodate and potassium iodide—that are stable when added to local table salt are being tried in El Salvador and Guatemala. These hold promise for the elimination of endemic goiter in many areas of the world in which custom, climate, and economic factors have made the type of iodized salt now in use in the United States impractical.

FROM A DEMONSTRATION TO A PERMANENT PROGRAM

In El Salvador

El Salvador's child feeding program was designed to acquaint children and parents with milk and its value as a food; interest people in the serious nutritional state of their nation; and stimulate the government to make their school feeding program a permanent one serving more children and more adequate meals.

UNICEF supplies (nonfat dry milk, dry whole milk for infants, fortified margarine, and fish liver oil capsules) first arrived in March 1950. At that time El Salvador had a school lunch program for 3,000 children. By March 1952, 37,000 school children, 1,000 preschool, and 2,000 infants were receiving the foods. Nutrition clinics increased from 2 to 14 within 2 months after the first shipment of UNICEF milk and have since increased to 40.

UNICEF contributed supplies worth \$45,600 during the first 18 months of the program. El Salvador from national, municipal, and private sources put into the program at least \$277,000 during the same period, five times as much, instead of just matching funds as specified by UNICEF. Local support in money and services contributed has been an outstanding accomplishment.

Special demonstration programs and scientific nutrition studies are still being carried on jointly by the government and INCAP. They include analysis of local foods, studies of the diet and nutritional status of children, and comparative growth studies of those whose diets include different proportions of animal and/or vegetable protein.

A nutrition service under the direction of a doctor trained in nutrition is now organized as part of the Division of

Maternal and Child Health in the Department of Public Health. The chief of the nutrition service represents the Department in a special commission set up by the President of El Salvador to study how to improve milk production and conservation with UNICEF aid.

A plant to dry milk is being planned by the government of El Salvador with the assistance of FAO and UNICEF.

FOUNDING A NATIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAM

In Iraq

Concerned about the high incidence of infant malnutrition, the Iraqi government called upon FAO for advice on correcting the condition. FAO sent a French physician who is also a nutritionist to study the situation. Guided by his recommendations, the Iraqi government began a national nutrition program by—

1. Establishing and providing money for a nutrition institute in Baghdad to conduct research into the present state of nutrition in Iraq and to spread knowledge of good health and food habits. The institute has a biochemistry laboratory and a 20-bed hospital. FAO fellowships have already given two doctors a year's specialized training in Europe.

2. Setting up a National Nutrition Committee, made up of representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health, Education, Finance and the Interior, and the Army. The committee is to work out ways to increase supplies of fish, soybeans, dairy products, and other protein foods, and improve agricultural production.

3. Initiating a school feeding program based on a daily glass of milk and a piece of bread or some dates for each child. The local government of each province will finance its own project.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING EDUCATION IN HOME ECONOMICS

In the Caribbean Area

The 3-month course in home economics sponsored by FAO and currently given in English at the University of Puerto Rico fulfills a recommendation made at last year's Conference on Home Economics and Education in Nutrition arranged by the Caribbean Commission and FAO.

Enrolled in the present university course on FAO fellowships are 26 women selected from 10 Caribbean countries. Most of them have been engaged in home economics teaching; the others were in social welfare and related fields. All will return to the jobs from which they have come or similar ones.

They are gaining new ideas through discussion and

analysis of problems of the home and family in their own countries, as well as through observing home improvement programs in Puerto Rico. Subject matter courses cover housing and health problems, food and nutrition, and child care and family relations. The group is learning techniques needed in home improvement—gardening and raising of rabbits, plain sewing and garment making, and constructing improvised furniture and home furnishings using simple tools.

This course is the latest step to meet the immediate need for trained workers in the Caribbean and is a result of the area's growing and continuing interest in the improvement of home and family life.

Background. In 1938-39 the West Indian Royal Commission studied rural problems in the British West Indies; its report is still an important planning guide applicable to most of the territories. Findings resulted in the establishment in 1940 of the British Colonial Development and Welfare Organization to interlock agricultural, educational, and social services in rural communities. Increasingly governments are giving leadership and financial assistance for work with rural women and young people, and encouraging leaders within the country to assume more responsibility for their own problems.

One of the most active programs being carried on is in Jamaica. A Food for Family Fitness Program initiated in 1945 is training voluntary local leaders to build up community programs. In this project a limited number of paid workers seek out public-spirited citizens with leadership qualities, give them training in nutrition and in methods of mass education, and teach them to spread messages on better eating habits and increased home food production.

In 1949, at the request of the Caribbean Commission, FAO sent a home economist to survey home economics and nutrition education in the territories. After 2 months exploration in 10 selected territories, she recommended a detailed action program including: Research to determine needs in home economics; preparation of simple home-making educational materials for teachers, students, and homemakers; increased opportunities in the Caribbean area for training in home economics at all educational levels; granting of more scholarships and fellowships; strengthening of extension programs and organizations for women and young people; and regular meetings for discussing and solving problems connected with home economics.

One outcome of this FAO survey was a 6-week workshop in 1950 at the University of Puerto Rico attended by 12 U. N. fellows from 9 territories. Another was the 3-week visit in 1951 of 10 senior officials in education and welfare organizations from Caribbean countries to observe activities of Puerto Rican agencies concerned with family problems. Still another was the 1952 Conference on Home

Economics and Education in Nutrition held in Trinidad (Oct. 1952 NCN), at which the recommendations mentioned at the beginning of this article were made.

TRAINING OF AUXILIARY AND COMMUNITY WORKERS

In South and East Asia

The Nutrition Committee for South and East Asia at its 1948 and 1950 meetings noted that progress in nutrition programs was being hampered by lack of personnel trained in nutrition. It recommended that teachers, nurses, and workers in allied fields who reach people in their homes and communities should be given some training in nutrition and its practical application.

Exchange of information at the 1953 committee meeting in Bandung, Indonesia, showed that most countries in the region have started giving such training. For example, in the Philippines within the past 2 years, 220 workers received 2-week orientation courses in nutrition. Among them were teachers, social workers, food demonstrators, physicians, nurses, extension workers, dentists, pharmacists, veterinarians, and chemists. In Indonesia, nutrition is emphasized in a 1-year course in health education and social aspects of maternal and child care, given to girls recruited from various villages. In Thailand, using a mobile unit equipped with an electric generator, a portable motion picture projector with sound unit, and simple cooking appliances and demonstration materials, a nutrition staff confers when and where possible with primary school teachers on the problem of diets.

Training in nutrition is being urged for two groups: (1) *Auxiliary workers*, persons with sufficient training to enable them to assist with, or to perform some of the functions of professional workers, to whom they would act as aides; and (2) *community workers*, multi-purpose village workers who have enough basic information to enable them to participate in many community activities. At the 1953 meeting, areas in which such workers could assist were listed as supplementary feeding programs, popularizing education in nutrition, and food consumption surveys.

Training of auxiliary and community workers is on the agenda of many regional meetings such as the present conference in Caracas, Venezuela, on nutrition problems in Latin America. This permits countries to look at the problem in the light of their own needs.

MATERIALS

Listing of these materials is for information of readers and does not necessarily mean recommendation. They may be obtained from the address given after the name of the publication. The symbol IDS refers to International Documents Service, Columbia University Press, 2960 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

MAIZE AND MAIZE DIETS. A NUTRITIONAL SURVEY. FAO Nutr. Studies No. 9, 94 pp., illus. 1953. IDS. \$1.

MEMO. Pub. monthly by FAO. From Foreign Agr. Serv., USDA, Washington 25, D. C. Free.

COURIER. Pub. monthly by UNESCO. IDS. \$2 a year.

FUNDAMENTAL AND ADULT EDUCATION. Pub. quarterly by UNESCO. IDS \$1.

ADULT LEADERSHIP. Programming for World Affairs. July–August 1953. (Vol. 2, no. 3). Pub. by Adult Education Association under grant from Ford Foundation. From Adult Leadership, 743 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 11, Ill. Single copies 50c.

EXPLORATIONS IN HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING. AN ASSESSMENT OF EXPERIENCE, 1947–53. 87 pp. 1953. From National Training Laboratory in Group Development, 1201 16th St., N. W., Washington, D. C. \$2.00.

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